

### **Foundational Principles - Discipleship Ministry**

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." Matthew 16:24-25*

*"Then Jesus said to those who believed Him, "If you abide in my Word, you are my disciples indeed." John 8:31*

- 1. We believe that discipleship is the "main thing."** If we make disciples like Jesus did and as he commanded, people will come to faith who didn't know Him. We, as disciples, will learn to follow Him more closely, and Nazareth will be a church that is focused on mission and serving others. None of this is sustainable outside of knowing God and being shaped by our relationship with Him. Within this framework a constant refinement of character happens alongside continued skill development. That was Jesus' way!
- 2. We believe that Jesus has given every believer a sacred mission:** "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you." (Matt 28: 18-20) For followers of Christ, making disciples is never optional. Christ deploys all believers into mission within the unique settings where we live and work and play.
- 3. We believe that in order to make disciples, we have to be a disciple.** From Jesus' perspective, a disciple is one who follows Him (Luke 5:1-11) and abides in His word (John 8:31) To be disciples, we must recognize and accept who Jesus is and place ourselves under His authority. We teach what we believe, but we reproduce what we are. The more we know Christ, the better we can make Him known. "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be." John 12:26
- 4. We believe that discipleship starts in the home.** We believe that parents have the primary responsibility of teaching and training their children about Jesus and how to be a Holy Spirit led follower of Him. We believe that our "love for the Lord and our willingness to obey His commands goes to the 1000th generation" Deuteronomy 6, Proverbs 22:6.
- 5. We believe that multiplication is a mark of discipleship.** (2Tim 2:2) As people commit to living lives as followers of Christ, the church guides them to train others who will, in turn, reach others. True discipleship is about multiplying the love and life of Christ...a commitment that requires a significant investment of time and energy on the part of all followers. Discipleship is the purpose of the church Christ established before He ascended.
- 6. We believe that discipleship is more than a program.** It is a way of living the Christian life and a process of maturing in faith. A variety of tools and approaches to discipleship are needed to encourage unity out of the profound diversity that God created. Some approaches may include programmatic elements, while others will be relational or cognitive or influenced by emotions. When it comes to spiritual nurturing, one size does not fit all. The actions of leaders, staff members, and congregation members should have an intentional focus on both growing as disciples and on making disciples.
- 7. We believe that love drives discipleship...love of God and love of others.** Love is basic to what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and it should be what motivates us to reach out to the world around us. Disciple-making is not a formula to follow, but a mutual loving relationship--a spiritual friendship-- that exists for the purpose of helping each other grow in grace and character. A servant attitude is part of the foundation that defines disciple-making. *"By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* John 13:35